

affective or emotional forms of insanity. 8th. Is suicide an intellectual act—notwithstanding the intelligence exercised in its execution? or is it an emotional act *per se*, since we have seen that the emotional part of mind dominates the ideational centres, and perverts the mind into becoming its humble servant? 9th. Does moral depravity satisfactorily account for it, when we have seen that moral depravity is a factor of both sane and insane? 10th. That in doubtful cases of the sanity or insanity of the *felo-de-se*, very great caution is necessary in making up a just judgment as to the one or the other. In making the second, third, and fourth conclusions Dr. Conrad ignores the cases in which suicide is committed under the influence of imperative conceptions and epileptic psychoses.

Consciousness in Melancholic Frenzy. Dr. H. R. Stedman, (*Alienist and Neurologist*, Jan., 1886) reports a case in which an epileptic melancholic wounded, with homicidal intent, her son, and, on seeing the blood flow, lost consciousness and then continued, automatically, the act once begun, with the result of cutting his head off and seriously wounded two other children as well as himself. The case in itself is not exceptional, but in the course of its discussion before the New England Society, the question was incidentally raised whether absence of consciousness, proved the epileptic nature of an act. Dr. Fisher said that there might be complete consciousness in melancholic frenzy. That in melancholic frenzy consciousness is seemingly abolished, there can be no doubt, but, the patient is under the sway of a delusion, but this condition differs psychologically from that of the epileptic, who performs his acts automatically, although, for practical forensic purposes, seemingly the same.

J. G. KIERNAN.

THERAPEUTICS.

The Action and Uses of Digitalis and its Substitutes, with Special Reference to Strophanthus. By Dr. Thomas Frazer (*Br. Med. Jour.*, Nov. 14, 1885). The author read a paper before the British Medical Association, which promises to be one of the most valuable contributions to therapeutics. This new drug, which Dr. Frazer has carefully studied, belongs to the digitalis group. It is a muscle poison in sufficient quantity and acts upon all striped muscles, increasing their contractile power. It acts on the heart more powerfully than on all other muscles, and in doses which produce no effect on other muscles. Its action on the heart is the same as that of digitalis, only more powerful—but it differs from digitalis in having very little effect in contracting the blood-vessels. Dr. Frazer then reported a number of extreme cases of heart disease, to which he gave strophanthus. Sphygmographic tracings are given showing plainly the effect of

the drug. In all the cases before treatment, the pulse-curves are represented simply by irregular wavy lines, and sometimes the pulse beats could not be counted. The tracings show marked and rapid improvement. The shortest time after giving the drug before improvement was noticed, was in a case where the pulse was so feeble and rapid as to be almost uncountable, $\frac{1}{50}$ gr. of strophantus was given subcutaneously. Improvement was shown in 20 minutes, and the effect of a simple dose lasted 24 hours, when the continuation of the effect of a single dose could not be noticed, as the drug then was given by the mouth.

On the Influence of Age on the Dosage of Nux Vomica, with Some Remarks on its Therapeutics. Dr. J. H. Musser (*Therap. Gaz.*, Jan. 15, 1885) states that the effect of strychnia upon the system varies with the age. From a study of his notes of 50 cases, he states that from 15 to 40 years of age, 45 drops or more of the tincture was almost invariably well borne. After 40 years it was the exception to be able to increase the dose over 35 drops without causing some disagreeable symptoms. The tincture, used was that of the pharmacopœia of 1870, which is one third stronger than that of 1880.

M. gives the usual dose, and then increases three to five drops every second day till some physiological effect, as twitching of some group of voluntary muscles, is produced. The dose is then reduced one third, and in a few days, especially if desirable to produce full effects, ascending doses are again administered. One patient, aged twenty-four, took two hundred drops three times daily. (Unfortunately M. leaves it in doubt whether or not by drops he means minims.) He claims that in the usually prescribed doses nux vomica, in most cases, has only a local action as a bitter; and even with larger doses the system readily becomes accustomed to its stimulation, requiring increasing doses.

Two disadvantageous symptoms produced by large doses were diarrhoea and frequent seminal emissions. As to its therapeutic value, M. recommends it especially in atonic dyspepsia, hypochondriasis, headache, weight on the head, and other nervous phenomena, and thinks its good effects first due to its action in increasing the reflex excitability of the spinal cord and vaso-motor centres. The drug is also recommended in emphysema, chronic bronchitis, mental and physical depression, etc.

Hyoscine Hydrobromate. Dr. HENRY M. WETHERELL, Jr., *Med. Times*, Dec. 26, 1885, speaks a good word for hyoscine hydrobromate as an hypnotic and sedative. His conclusions are formed from its use in the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane. As an hypnotic the usual dose is $\frac{1}{10}$ to $\frac{1}{5}$ grain; sometimes a less dose than $\frac{1}{20}$ grain will suffice. It is seldom necessary to repeat the dose, another decided advantage it possesses over hyoscyamine is that